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# On the predicaments of the English L1 language learner: a conceptual article

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The unparalleled rise of English has led native speakers (L1) to becoming increasingly outnumbered by L2 speakers; English as global commodity has stimulated much research into the learning and teaching of English. Meanwhile, fewer and fewer L1 English speakers are choosing to learn languages; a phenomenon which has received less attention. This article investigates both phenomena in the light of two recent theoretical developments in Applied Linguistics and second language acquisition (SLA), namely dynamic system theory and the multilingual turn in SLA, scrutinising the effects of the re-positioning of L1 English language learners. The conclusion suggests a conceptualisation of this learner group alongside, and yet very different to, other linguistically disadvantaged group. Pedagogical pathways to best support this learner group are also discussed.

**Keywords:** Global English, dynamic systems theory, SLA, learner motivation, multilingual turn

Bedingt durch die beispiellose Popularität der englischen Sprache als internationale und Zweitsprache geraten englische Muttersprachler zunehmend in die Minderheit. Das Forschungsinteresse um das Phänomen *Global English* ist derzeit stark auf den englischen Spracherwerb konzentriert; Auswirkungen auf englische Muttersprachler, insbesondere der stark rückläufige Trend zum Zweitspracherwerb bei englischen Muttersprachlern wird wenig beachtet. Dieser Artikel untersucht die Position englischer Muttersprachler als Sprachlerner unter zwei aktuellen theoretischen Entwicklungen der angewandten Sprachwissenschaft und Spracherwerbsforschung: *Dynamic System Theory* (DSA) und die *multilinguale Wende*. Die Schlussfolgerung regt an, diese Lernergruppe als pädagogisch benachteiligt zu konzeptualisieren, und diskutiert die pädagogische Reichweite und Mittel, diese Lernergruppe zu unterstützen.

**Schlüsselwörter:** Global English, dynamic systems theory, Zweitspracherwerb, Motivation, multilinguale Wende

This argument, that monolingual English speakers will be at a disadvantage in an increasingly multilingual world, is a theme we are likely to hear more of in the coming decade (Graddol 2010: 2).

## Introduction

The fast accelerating global spread of English is arguably one of the most significant linguistic developments known to this day; the popularity of English for language learners remains unrivalled. Notwithstanding the methodological challenges of estimating the number of mother tongue speakers of English (L1E) or learners of English (e.g. How to count bilinguals? Do English Creole varieties count?), there can be no doubt that English has by far the largest number of learners. Learners/L2 speakers are set to increase so fast that an estimated 50% of the global population might speak (some form of) English in the future (Graddol 2006: 100). Second language learning of much more widely spoken L1s such as Chinese, with estimated L1 speakers at 1,213 million (Seargeant 2012: 48), is also growing; nonetheless, English lacks a single rival as international language (Lo Bianco and Aliani 2013: 10f). This global linguistic phenomenon has spurred much research interest in the learning and teaching of English, while the impact for L1E speakers and in particular L1E learners of other languages (L1ELL) has received less

scholarly exploration. This article explores the global linguistic contexts of the decreasing numbers of L1ELLs, and thus responds to calls for contextualising language learning within a 'larger frame'. In doing so, it will take on board two recent developments in Applied Linguistics and second language research: the application of dynamic systems theory (DST) in second language research and the multilingual turn in SLA. After a brief outline of:

- current debates on and trends in Global English;
- language learning in Anglophone countries;
- DST in language learning; and
- the multilingual turn.

the main section of this article argues that, combining linguistic evidence and theoretical linguistic trends, the task of L1ELLs can be described as increasingly difficult. The article concludes with a series of arguments for the need to address the increasing obstacles of this learner group, and discusses pedagogical and policy pathways that might aid this learner group.

## Current debates on Global English

As space precludes a detailed discussion of the widely differing views on the benefits and adverse effects of Global English, this section focuses on two contrasting conceptualisations of L1 speakers and learners of English. The homogenic position postulates that Global English leads to a homogenisation of the language and culture associated with English, a position often associated with anti-Global English campaigners (Skutnabb-Kangas 2013); however, the homogenic view might also embrace learning of English as a liberating reaction to colonialism, or appropriation of the language for the learner's own purposes (e.g. Canagarajah 2005). The homogenic position has largely been superseded by heterogenic position (e.g. Jenkins 2006; 2009), emphasising the variety of Englishes, while others still, such as Pennycook (2003), argue that the ultimate effect of globalisation is neither homogenisation or heterogenisation "but a complex mixture of the two" (McKay 2011: 123). Critiques of Global English have done little to dampen its desirability; English skills are seen as elemental for participation in the 21st century. English is ever-encroaching into new domains (Erling and Seargeant 2013), despite a growing body of evidence that the resulting neglect of other national or regional languages may impede economic growth and development, both in Western (Lo Bianco 2009: 11, see also below) and developing countries (Arcand and Grin 2013).

Globalisation and the ubiquity of social media have aided L2 English learning, resulting in an abundance of English learning opportunities, pedagogical literature and language learning materials. The 'thirst' for English is also demonstrated in elaborately created 'imagined English communities', English learning and teaching institutions in countries with geographically more remote access to English L1 speakers, such as South Korea or Japan (Seargeant 2005). In the eyes of many learners of English, "English is a translocal language, a language of fluidity and fixity that moves across [. . .] English is bound up with transcultural flows, a language of imagined communities and refashioned identities" (Pennycook 2007: 6).

Reflections on L1E speakers in the Global English debate tend to focus on the effects of heterogenisations (Graddol 2006), incurring a loss of 'ownership' for L1E speakers (e.g. Higgins 2003; Jenkins 2006; 2013). Global English had led to a situation "[w]here the UK once directed the spread of English, we are now just one of many shareholders in the asset that it represents" (Jones and Bradford 2007).

In fact, both the homogenisation and heterogenisation views generate difficulties for L1E speakers: Does the homogenic view frame L1E speakers as coercing the hegemony of English? Should they aim to counter this hegemony, for instance by learning other languages? In a heterogenic position, will (all or some) L1E speakers become relegated, as suggested above, and if so, which speakers, and what are the economic, social and

psychological consequences of this? Currently, debates on such issues can be found in public (Jones and Bradwell 2007; *The Guardian* 2014) more than academic discourse, despite its relevance for all English-dominant countries (the ‘Anglosphere’, Lo Bianco 2009), notably the UK, US and Australia. The language learning context in these countries is discussed next.

## L1 English speakers and Global English

In an increasingly Anglophone world, viewing English native command as sufficient language skill rests on the triple assumptions that: (a) native command of this language will outweigh disadvantages of monolingualism; (b) native varieties will continue to be more prestigious and advantageous to possess than non-native varieties; and (c) the position of English as a lingua franca will remain uncontested. These assumptions have been challenged. Graddol illustrates the advantages of L2 English speakers with a variety of other languages over English monolinguals:

Central Asians mainly speak their own variety, that of neighbour, and Russian, and increasingly English. Adding English to their existing linguistic repertoires will allow such bi/multilingual people to compete for any employment or other opportunity for which English is a requirement, as well as those for which proficiency in other languages is a requirement. Monolingual English-speakers on the other hand will not be able to do the same. (Graddol, 2006: 55)

and concludes “as English becomes more generally available, little or no competitive advantage is gained by adopting it. Rather, it has become a new baseline: without English you are not even in the race” (Graddol 2006: 122). As command of English – as ubiquitous default choice – loses prestige, the question remains if command of a native speaker variety offers competitive advantages (assumption (b)). The fallacy of ‘English is enough’ has been both evidenced and challenged in several countries, for instance, in Australia, Clyne (2011) contrasts the low priority of LOTE (languages other than English) in education policy with the nation’s economic needs; in the UK, Coleman (2009) relates politicians’ implicit reference to the fallacy to Anglocentricism and monolingualism, in the US, Demont-Heinrich (2010) analyses the effect of the global hegemony of English on foreign language learning in the US.

The literature on varieties of English(es), has burgeoned, increasingly emphasising differences between native English and world English, English as Lingua franca, etc. varieties. As native speakers varieties are not always mutually intelligible with L2 varieties, native speakers communicating with non-natives in these varieties can be disadvantaged (Canagarajah and Wurr 2011: 4; Cogo and Dewey 2006) while, conversely, the notion that non-native varieties could be regarded as somehow deficient has been comprehensively discarded over the last decades (see Jenkins 2009: 203).

To sum up, the increasing numbers of English L2 speakers are not only relegating native speaker competencies, but shape new, fluid varieties of English where native command may have no advantages. If, in the domain of English teaching and learning, the native speaker ideal for learners has been eroded long ago (Rampton 1990), the discussion has shifted to the issue if native speaker teachers might be disadvantaged:

If we took the notion of WE [World Englishes] seriously, it would follow that the so-called native speaker of English, whose presumed one-upmanship in relation to non-natives (that is to say, so long as discussion was confined to speaking English in one of the native environments) primarily rested on his/her having been brought up in a monolingual environment, is at a clear disadvantage vis-à-vis the large mass of people performing routine tasks in it. [...] the day may not be all that far off when native speakers of English may need to take crash courses in WE [World English]. (Rajagopalan 2004: 117)

## Language learning in Anglophone countries

Already in 1998, Crystal warned that in a world of Global English, English L1 speakers might consider it unnecessary to learn other languages. Conversely, English L1 speakers tend to consider it essential for non-native speakers to learn English (Demont-Heinrich 2010). In most Anglophone countries, such English hegemonic perspectives are tangible in their language education policies, which can be characterised by a focus on English competencies (e.g. Johnson 2010; Johnson and Freeman 2010), to the detriment of diversity, opportunity and proficiency in the learning of languages other than English (e.g. Crawford 2000; Horner and Trimbur 2000; Worton 2009). Consequently, major Anglophone countries currently experience deficiencies in language skills other than English; this debate will be briefly sketched below.

In the United States, politicians (e.g. Simon 1980; *Forbes* 2012), academics (e.g. Cardinale 2003; Berman 2011), the military (Hardison, Miller, Li, Schroeder, Burkhauser, Robson, and Lai 2012), and the media (*USA Today* 2008) have voiced concern about the lack of language learning for over three decades now, arguing that social and economic benefits of foreign language skills for the nations are overlooked (Oleksak 2007). Indeed, only 18% of the US population profess to speak foreign languages, compared to 53% in Europe (Eaton 2010). The *English Plus* movement has campaigned for over a decade now against English monolingual education policies (Crawford 2000; Horner and Trimbur 2002), which are described as rooted in an ideology of monolingual English hegemony (e.g. Demont-Heinrich 2007; 2009; Matsuda 2006; 2013).

Debates on language education in Australasia focus on the lack of language skills in languages needed for their major trading partners, namely, Asian/Indonesian languages (for Australia, see: Group of 8, 2007; Languages in crisis 2007; McClelland 2007; Lo Bianco 2009; *Voice of America* 2009; Asia Education Foundation 2010; Gil 2010; *The Australian* 2010; Lo Bianco and Aliani 2013; for New Zealand, see: May 2005; East 2008a, b, 2009). Language planners called for an urgent investment of \$11.3 billion to counter the lack of Asian language skills in Australia (Lo Bianco 2009: 5).

In Europe, the EU proposes that all EU citizens should have some proficiency in three European languages. English-speaking countries consistently fall far behind this goal: language proficiency among adults in Ireland, Wales and England are consistently lowest in Europe (European Commission 2012). The language learning crisis in the UK is by now well documented (Tinsley and Han 2012; Tinsley 2013;) and has received considerable media coverage (Lanvers and Coleman 2013); despite many initiatives to increase language take-up at school and university level, and powerful economic arguments for the need to improve language skills (*The Guardian* 2014), overall language take-up at both secondary and tertiary levels continues to drop.

Overall, despite considerable evidence for economic, social and educational needs to improve language skills, and the multilingual/multicultural nature of many communities in Anglophone countries (for the UK, see McPake, Sachdev, and Routes into Languages 2008, for the US, Wiley 2007, for Australia, see McCarty, Romero, and Zepeda 2006), the interest in and take-up of language learning in Anglophone countries lags far behind that in other countries.

A side-effect of the popularity of English is an increasing double handicap of L1ELLs, first as L1 speakers interacting with increasingly diverse groups of L2 speakers, and then as language learners. This detriment is often reinforced by L1E speakers themselves. For instance, students from Anglophone countries choose to go abroad during their study much less than students from other countries (Davidson 2007; Siegfried and Stock 2007). Problems relating to education systems largely contribute to learner disinterest, as languages enjoy poor status in most Anglophone countries. Furthermore, in England, the modern languages curricula (Pachler 2007; Busse and Walter

2013), have been described as uninspiring at all levels. Furthermore, achieving good grades in a language qualification is considerably harder compared than in other subjects in England.

## L1ELL as Elite pursuit

For the diminishing number L1 English speakers still learning languages, this choice activity is becoming increasingly one from relatively privileged backgrounds (Lo Bianco 2009: v, 11). Nowhere is this more obvious than in England, where language learning was made optional for all students aged 14+ in 2004, triggering not only a sharp decline in language learning (e.g. Lanvers 2011; Lanvers and Coleman 2013) but also an increasing social divide between those who opt for languages and those who do not. This can be demonstrated in all sectors. At university level, those studying modern languages have the highest proportion of private-school educated background (Tinsley 2013). At A-level (nationally standardised and accredited tests in a variety of subjects at age 18+), a third of students taking languages come from private schools, compared to 16% of A-level students who attend private schools overall. At GCSE (nationally standardised and accredited tests in a variety of subjects at age 16+), 71% of privately educated students take languages, compared to 39% in the state sector. Furthermore, differences between state schools are stark: children who are offered free school meals in school (a recognised measurement of social disadvantage) are half as likely to study a language for GCSE than other pupils (all statistics: Tinsley 2013: 117ff). Conversely, schools with the lowest percentages of students entitled to free school meals have considerably more students studying a language for GCSE. Thus, “in England, studying a language to GCSE is more associated with advantage than NOT studying a language is with disadvantage” (Tinsley 2013: 119, emphasis in original). Languages have been identified as the ‘sticky point’ for many pupils, who often see no value in studying languages (Association for Language Learning 2012). The decline in language take-up continues at A-level (Association for Language Learning 2013) and beyond (*The Guardian* 2013). The implications of this elitist trend should be considered in the light of benefits of language learning in general terms; we shall therefore return to this point in the conclusion.

The above sections cited evidence for the disinterest in English L1 speakers in language learning, and the outnumbering of L1 by L2 English speakers. The next two sections interpret these phenomena in the light of two recent theoretical developments in second language research, namely DST and the multilingual turn.

## Dynamic systems theory and language learning

Over the last decade, Applied Linguistics, in particular research in second language development, has looked increasingly towards DST (De Bot, Lowie, and Verspoor 2007; Larsen-Freeman and Cameron 2008a) as a theoretical framework for learning processes, emphasising the interaction between social and cognitive systems. The interest is evidenced, for instance, by special issues on the topic in leading journals in the field (Ellis and Larsen-Freeman 2006; Lafford 2008) and the fast increasing body of publications on DST in Applied Linguistics (e.g. De Bot et al. 2007; Larsen-Freeman and Cameron 2008a, b). In DST, a system is known to be complex or dynamic if it has at least two or more elements, those elements are dynamically interlinked and change independently over time (Dörnyei and Ushioda 2009). DST draws on usage based linguistics, which views language not as a fixed code; rather, language utterances are assembled at each occasion from conventional units. DST interprets language forms, as well as language practices, as the result of complex interactions of conditions, whereby tendencies of language practices may lead to ever emerging and changing patterns (De Bot 2008). An emergentist view of DST describes language change to be resulting from

interaction of members of language communities, language perception and language learning behaviour (Ellis 2008). DST thus functions as a meta theory that describes language learning as a complex interaction of learner subsystems (such as cognitive, psychological, socio-political, cultural political systems) leading to great variability and changeability of learner outcomes, given the unpredictable nature of effect size of any one factor in a given sub-system. Furthermore, for language learning to occur, both internal (e.g. cognitive, psychological) and external (e.g. learning environment, material, language policy) resources must facilitate growth. In this dynamic, seemingly chaotic process, systems may nonetheless settle into an 'attractor state' facilitated by felicitous and relatively stable conditions in any given sub system, supported by suitable conditions in neighbouring influencing systems; conversely, 'repellor states' may result if infelicitous factors conflate (De Bot et al. 2007).

In a world where L2 English speakers outnumber L1 speakers about 4:1 (or more), the emergentist principles of language change would strongly predict any changes to be dominated by L2 speakers, underscoring the handicaps of L1 speakers (see Rajagopalan 2004). Equally crucial for this debate, DST makes no conceptual difference between language learners and users: both assemble language from given units at each instance of utterance. Of all DST postulations, this one might conceivably have the most far-reaching consequences in the context of this discussion, for it provides theoretical underpinning for the empirical developments described above, namely the shaping of new English(es) by L2 rather than the outnumbered (and thus marginalised) group of L1 speakers. As new lingua franca based on English are ever evolving and developing, new varieties can become both mutually unintelligible, and unintelligible to L1 speakers. This process opens up further marginalisation of native English varieties, as new varieties do not need to rely on 'donor' L1 models, but can evolve from existing L2 varieties. In such scenarios, the English monolingual, with access to only to their L1 variety, will have no access to linguistic resource for global communication, while the polyglot, with competencies in their own local/regional/national language(s) as well as some form of English-based lingua franca, will have access to at least one, if not several.

DST conceptualises language learning as holistically embedded in its social, cultural, linguistic, economic, psychological and educational context, and different interlocking sub-systems are believed to be nested in another, repeating fractal patterns in a similar fashion to systems on a larger scale. In DST, the effectiveness of the whole system is considered an aggregate of effective cooperation of all sub-systems. DST often draws upon metaphors, especially from ecology and systems science, to conceptualise processes such as language development (Larsen-Freeman and Cameron 2008a).

Even though a DST approach sounds like (and basically is) an ultimately mechanistic metaphor for language and language use, it is able to make clear the link between the social and the psychological aspects of the individual and language through the interconnectedness of systems. (De Bot, Verspoor, and Lowie 2005: 117)

One visual representation of such a mechanistic metaphor is that of interlocking clouds, representing macro (e.g. language policy, status of L1 and L2, attitudes towards multilingualism), meso (e.g. teachers, peers, material, immediate social environment) and micro dimensions (e.g. motivation), as represented in Figure 1.

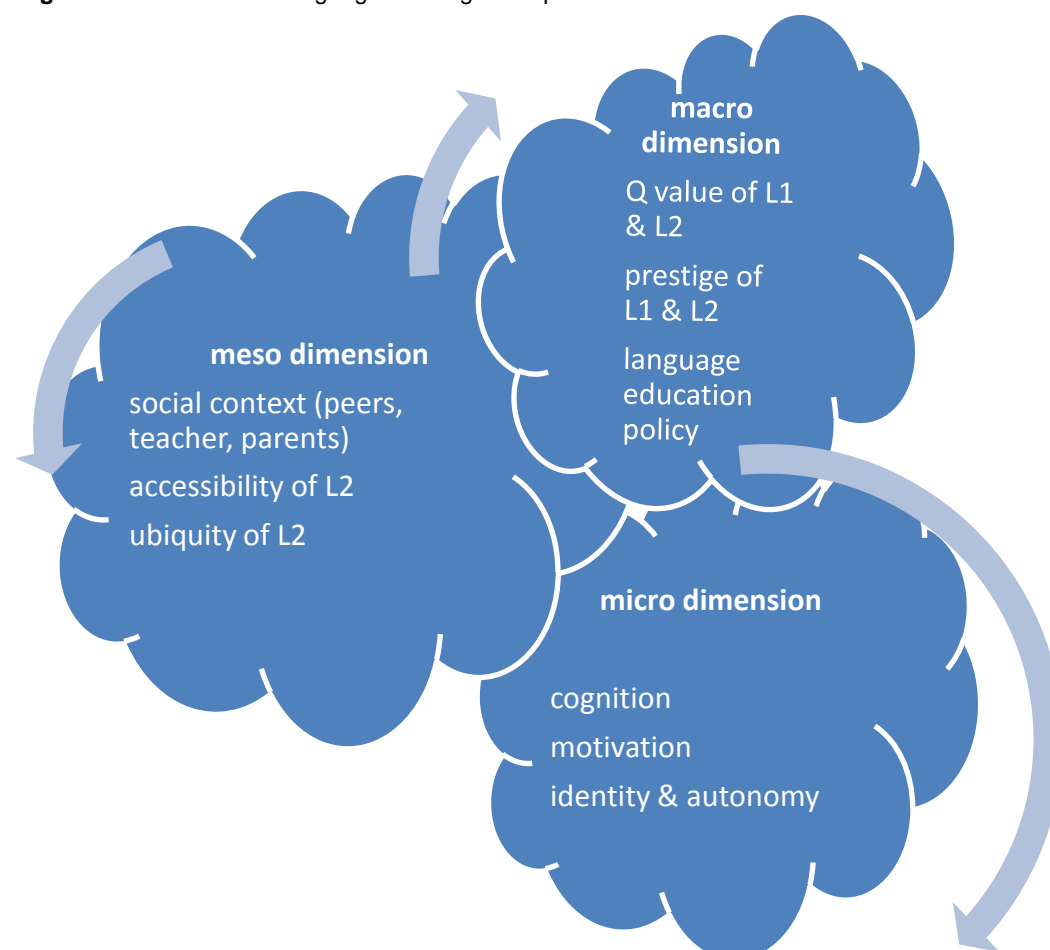
This visual representation attempts to do justice to the permeability of all dimensions, representing the fundamentally different conditions, at all levels, for learners learning English on the one hand, and L1ELL on the other, as illustrated in Figures 2 and 3.

Core components in the macro dimension such as (perceived or real) economic, personal and social benefits of language skills help to explain today's popularity of English. Recently, applied linguists have tried to capture

the economic dimension of a language: in the relatively new discipline of economic linguistics, economic formulas try to measure the attraction of a language by taking into account variables such as average earnings of speakers of a language and numbers of L2 learners (Grin 2003), permitting to attach a Q value to a given language:

The Q value of a language is the product of its prevalence, i.e. the proportion of individuals in the community who speak it, and its

**Figure 1.** Dimensions in language learning: a simple DST model



centrality, i.e. the proportion of multilingual speakers in whose repertoire it is included. Speakers are attracted to languages that allow them to communicate with the largest number of other speakers, hence the highest Q value (Herbert 2011: 403f).

The Global English phenomenon has ensured that no language can currently rival the Q value of English, providing learners with a powerful learning incentive. The next section will discuss the facilitating and constraining effects that Global English has, on the one hand, for learners of English, and, on the other, L1ELLs, in each of the sub-systems involved in the language learning process.

### Learners of English and L1ELLs in the light of DST

As mentioned above, the Global English phenomenon offers learners of English obvious advantages on the macro level. The high Q value of English, combined with (perceived or real) high social and economic benefits of knowing the language, facilitate both instrumental and social motivations for learning. Learners perceive an investment into English as bestowing them with high capital gain, in the wider Bourdieuan sense of economic, social, symbolic and cultural capital (Bourdieu 2008). The desirability of English has

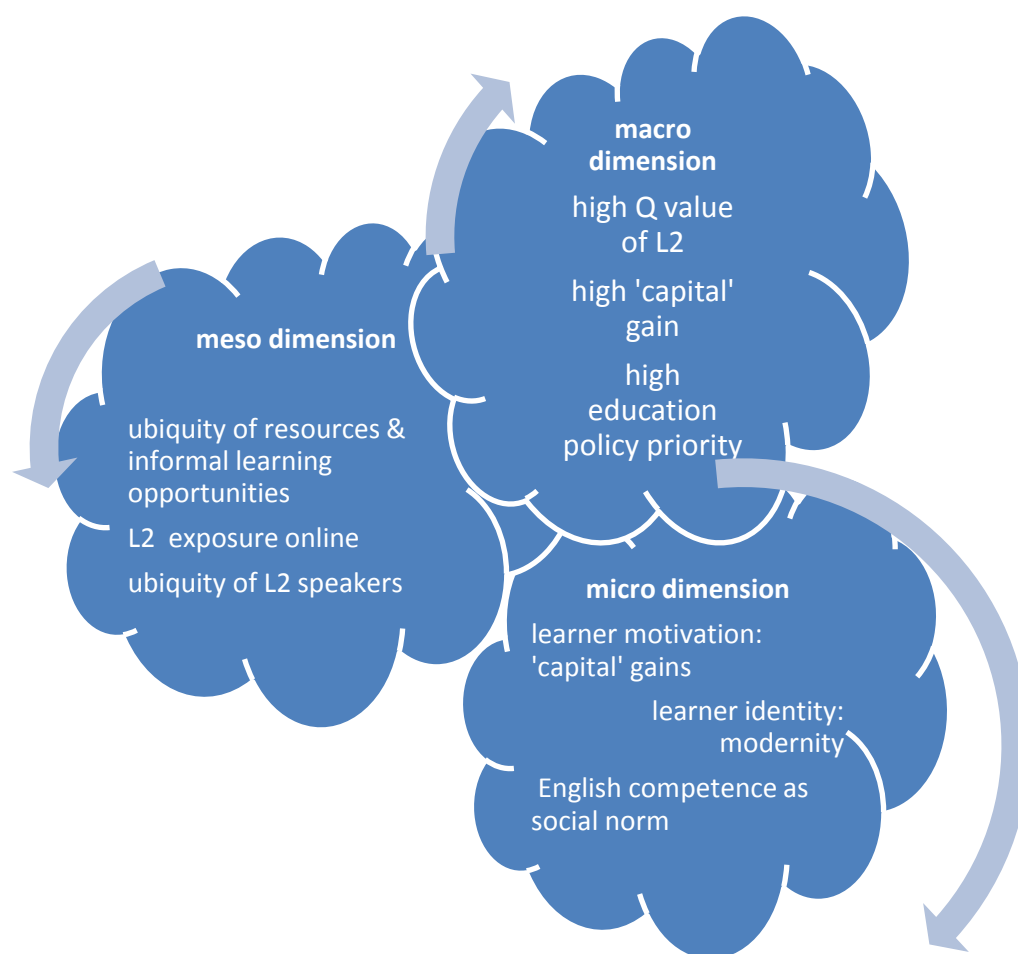


also facilitated access to the L2 in a number of ways (online presence, ubiquity of modern teaching material and courses for large variety or target audiences). In European language education policies, English has for some time now superseded other modern languages (Frath 2010; Seidlhofer 2011). The learner of English may also benefit from many advantages in their immediate environment, such as the ubiquity of – often modern and pedagogically up-to-date – good quality, often inexpensive (or free, online) learner material. On the psychological level, students' motivation to learn English may be driven not just by their perception of high economic and professional benefits, but also an increasing 'normalisation' of English skills. Figure 2 shows the DST model with its basic three dimensions adapted to the situation of learners of English, emphasising the advantages for this learner group. Borrowing yet another metaphor, that of a 'learning machine' with cogs, the aggregated effect of felicitous conditions at each level can be likened to oil in the machine. This metaphor does not intend to insinuate that (all, or many) learners of English work in felicitous conditions; for many learners, the opposite may apply (e.g. poor teaching materials, poor tuition, poor physical learning environment); rather, the motivational advantages, and the Q value of English at the macro level, might somewhat compensate for poor factors on other levels; one well-oiled cog might suffice to lubricate the whole machine, ensuring a continuation of the learning process. In other words, learner contexts of many learners of English have reached attractor state.

The same analysis of felicitous and constraining factors for the learner group of L1ELLs yields very different results. The above sketched handicaps of this learner group, combined with their 'elite' social background, puts them in a particular social conundrum: Should prospective students 'risk' numerical and/or social handicaps (doing a 'posh' subject in a 'non-posh' school) or stay with the monolingual majority, as many UK schools in rural and semi-rural settings are still dominantly monolingual and monocultural? Should they perhaps embrace its 'elite' dimension? The L1ELL obstacles generate identity problems both on the social and individual level, which is a particular concern for students of an age prone to peer pressure. Tirelessly, the UK Government has funded initiatives to counter these demotivational effects, appealing to the many benefits of language learning (Lanvers 2011; British Academy 2013), to little effect so far, judged by the continuing decline in take-up.

A particular conundrum for L1E speakers is the eagerness of the many L2 speakers practise English with them (rather than the L1E's L2), which can be exacerbated by some L2 speaker's desire to 'keep their language for themselves', effectively using the switch to English as a gatekeeping device limiting the opportunities for L1ELLs to practise their L2 and to integrate into their language community (Lanvers 2012).

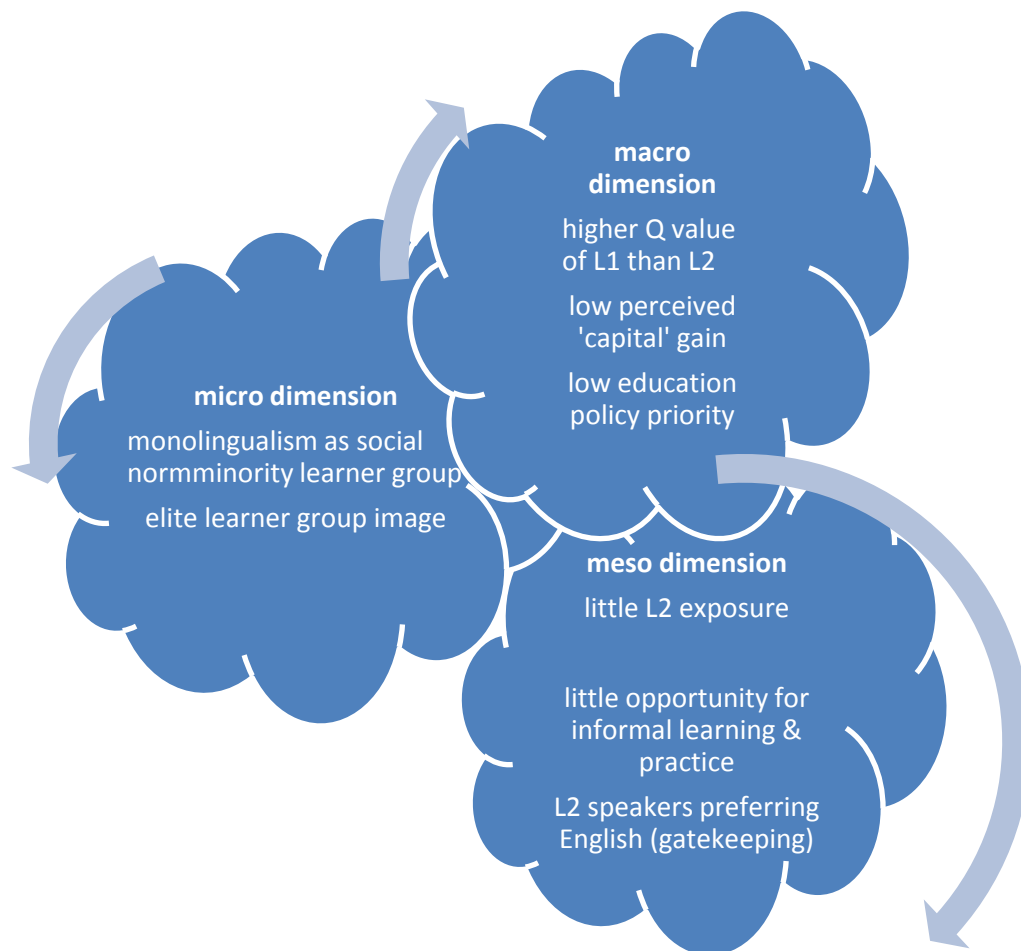
**Figure 2.** Facilitating factors for learners of English in DST: oil in the machine



On the micro, meso and macro level, advantages observed for learners of English (such as status, Q value) are reversed for L1ELLs. While L1ELLs might be able to access authentic target language material online, they will never benefit from the online, media and cultural presence that English enjoys, thus restricting opportunities for informal learning. On the macro level, awareness of the importance of Global English may impede learner motivation, especially if the chosen L2 is a lesser spoken one (Lanvers 2013); any chosen L2 will have a lower Q value than the learner's L1. While economic and other 'capital' gains of language learning are certainly present, the benefits are less tangible and obvious, for young learners in particular, and the low priority given to language learning in many Anglophone countries hampers language take-up. In sum, for the L1ELL, Global English can be seen to have some constraining effect on language learning in each dimension, as illustrated in Figure 3, thus inviting the metaphor of sand rather than oil in the language learning machine. In short, the L1ELL is forced to work in a repeller state, at the level of at least one if not several (or all) sub systems.

If viewing the process of language learning for L1E speakers through the lens of DST has underlined the struggle' for this group, the concerns for the larger number of L1E speakers not learning languages, or discontinuing

**Figure 3.** Constraining factors for L1ELLs: sand in the machine



learning having achieved basic levels only, are equally grave. The next section will discuss monolingualism in the light of a further recent development in second language research, 'the multilingual turn' (May 2013; Ortega 2013).

### The multilingual turn in second language research

Besides an intense interest in DST, second language acquisition research has experienced further recent major theoretical shifts. First, the social turn in second language acquisition, aptly described in same-named volume (Block 2003), marks a turn towards sociocultural, social constructivist and sociolinguistic approaches in second language learning research; a shift described by some as completed by now. More recently, Ortega (2013) proposed a multilingual turn in second language acquisition research, proposing to view language competencies not as compartmentalised in different languages but as dynamic, integrative and complementary. Apart from the explicit aim of placing the research field of language acquisition in a transdisciplinary framework (Ortega 2013), the multilingual turn criticises the hitherto relatively widespread attitude of 'monolingualism and nativism (= native speaker competence) as norm', exposed in oppositions such as 'native and non-native speaker', and proposes instead to adopt the reality of plurilingualism as norm and to redress perceptions of linguistic ownership insinuated by the native speaker bias (Ortega 2013).

The multilingual turn provides an apt framework for empirical research into cognitive and social effects of plurilingualism. For some time now, linguists have been pointing out the multiple benefits of plurilingualism, such as better metalinguistic skills (in all languages including L1), critical thinking skills, and communicative competencies (see Cenoz and Gorter 2011). This research is supported by an ever-increasing body of neurolinguistic research documenting cognitive benefits of multilingualism (for overviews, see e.g.

Adesope, Lavin, Thompson, and Ungerleider 2010; Hobbs 2011). These effects are understood to be cumulative rather than additive, with past language learning snowballing future language learning as well as social, cognitive, professional and intercultural benefits (Cenoz 2009).

This new multilingual paradigm is also favoured by Global English researchers favouring a pluricentric or liberational approach. Canagarajah and Wurr (2011: 3) propose:

An orientation to language where languages influence each other mutually, where users treat their competencies along a continuum and not as separate entities

and point out the inaptness of hitherto common sense distinction in second language acquisition such as 'native' versus 'non-native' and 'learner' versus 'user' in this fluid multilingual paradigm.

The multilingual turn has two important implications for the group of L1E speakers:

1. within the domain of English teaching and learning, the notion of native speaker ideal has been increasingly eroded in the last decades. The multilingual turn adds to the already considerable devaluation of the notion of the 'native speaker' as model, refuting what advantage L1E speakers might conceivably have in the age of Global English; and
2. the multilingual turn underscores both linguistic and other disadvantages of monolingualism.

Global English has aided the normalisation of multilingual identities, including strong English L2 competency alongside an L1 (Seidlhofer 2007), while L1E speakers struggle to develop L2 language competencies, so that proficient L2 speakers of English might feel 'secure' in their L2 identity, while English monoglot or the near-monoglot (with some add-on language skills) enjoy no such security (Graddol 2006). The predicaments of L1E speakers, as proposed by Graddol, and validation of multilingualism, as proposed by Ortega, both aid the 'dethroning' of the native speaker English ideal. In this context, perceiving English monolinguals as advantaged betrays a (rather dated, see above) homogenic and English-centric view.

## Discussion

Asystematic analysis of L1ELL learner contexts in the light of DST has revealed disadvantages for English native speakers in all dimensions, encumbering access to the many advantages of plurilingualism – social, cognitive, cultural, professional. L1ELLS determined to overcome these obstacles will benefit immensely; the increasingly elitist nature of this learner group suggests that socially advantaged learners: (a) manage to counter the predicaments against them better; and (b) are better equipped to recognise and capitalise on the advantages of plurilingualism. Viewed from this perspective, supporting L1ELLS who are not among the privileged becomes all the more imperative, a sobering consideration before equating L1E monolinguals with post-colonial attitudes and hegemonic views on Global English.

In addition to personal benefits for L1E speakers to learn languages, there are (at least) three benefits on a wider societal level, namely ideological, economic and social arguments, which will be discussed in turn. Regarding the first, L1ELLS can help to counter the hegemony of English by actively spreading the 'burden of language learning'. Each time an L1E speaker learns another language s/he contributes to the Q value of their chosen language, and, in a small way, shifts the relative Q value of English. Second, most Anglophone countries are in need of language skills to better their trade and commerce (Business for New Europe 2012, see also above). Third, and most poignantly for the UK, a socially diverse up-take of language learning would counter the current trend of language skills becoming a 'vignette' of social background, and would help to normalise language competencies, in the same way learning English is normalised, across all social strata, in other countries.

Linguicism, defined as unfair treatment of a person as a result of their

language use alone (Skutnabb-Kangas 1988), is normally used in connection with minority language speakers, not with L1 speakers of English. However, if the L1ELL, faced with problems such as:

- developing learner motivation in the face of the Q value of their L1;
- lack of opportunities for informal learning (e.g. online, pop culture);
- scarcity of L2 (willing) practice partners; and
- contravening sociocultural norms of monolingualism,

is then: (a) stigmatised as ‘elite’ on the home ground; and (b) finds that potential L2 speaking partners want to practise English, not the chosen L2 (Lanvers 2012), a case for linguisticism can indeed be made.

At first glance, the notion of linguisticism against mother tongue English speakers seems to jar with commonly expressed concerns of language rights for minorities (e.g. Hobbs 2011), warranting special support and protection. L1ELLs tend to differ from such minorities both numerically – being mostly situated in relatively monolingual cultures – and in their socio-economic background. However, the current language learning decline in Anglophone countries clearly suggests that these learners need support, in particular if any of the triple aims of: (a) countering English hegemony; (b) countering the elite nature of language learning in Anglophone countries; and (c) fostering economic development and trade are to be achieved.

Pedagogical interventions at the classroom or school level might start focusing on these societal aims, in addition to emphasising cognitive, cultural and professional benefits of language learning, for instance by targeting language programmes at schools and pupil demographics which are currently underachieving, even compared to the low national norms of L2 take-up. The ‘effeminate’ perception of modern languages in UK school contexts (e.g. Burden, Williams, and Lanvers 2002) adds a further dimension in this undertaking. Increasing the Q value of a given L2 significantly is beyond the remit of any one institution, however, at the (smaller) institutional level, new media offer at least the opportunity to normalise L2 exposure and L2 interaction in a similar way learners of English are exposed to their L2, while normalising language learning per se relates to the macro dimension, such as language policy.

## Conclusion

Monolingual English speakers, as well as the field of English language teaching, have been variably associated with arrogant, chauvinistic or imperialistic attitudes (e.g. Alatis and Straehle 2006). The flip side is that English L1 speakers – victims of their language’s success – suffer increasingly from monolingual isolation. As they lose their native speaker advantage through ever-expanding Global English, their predicaments as language learners, such as reduced opportunities to practise their L2, worsen. The isolationism is set to grow as other global languages are spreading fast, noticeable for instance in the fast increase of Internet traffic in other languages (Graddol 2006). May (2012: 210) concludes that Global English has reached a stage of development where native command will not yield many advantages but does stifle attempts to learn other languages, as discussed above.

Skutnabb-Kangas (2013: 264) pities the English monolingual: “Monolingual English speakers will not only lose out. We multilinguals may in a hundred years’ time show voluntary English monolinguals (those who could have learned other languages but chose not to) in pathological museums”. She likens the monolingual to an “individual who suffers from monolingual stupidity in need of care, just like any patients” (Skutnabb-Kangas 2013: 248), framing them as passive and needy (Skutnabb-Kangas 2013: 612). In contrast, May (2012: 329) suggests “for monolingual majority language speakers to ‘renegotiate the terms of agreement’ with those that use majority languages as L2”.

This article proposed an outline of the global linguistic context for L1ELLs: the specifics of macro, meso and micro contexts will depend on national, regional, local, school and individual contexts. Further studies might focus on

specific learner problems or groups, such as Secondary school L1ELLs from non-privileged backgrounds, in order to support them best as they are working against a peer culture of monolingualism. It is likely that many groups of L1ELLs will need considerable support to develop learner motivation, L2 competencies and renegotiate (see May 2012) the use of English as they try to practise their L2 but, as so often, learners from less advantaged backgrounds will need considerably more support still. The multiple disadvantages (i.e. social, in addition to all those listed in Figure 2) of this learner group, sitting at one end of the monolingual-plurilingual spectrum, need to be acknowledged and translated into targeted pedagogical support (e.g. developing confidence to practise their L2, confidently renegotiate code-switching back to L2) if we ask them to move along this spectrum; once they do, they have everything to gain.

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